

handle the U.S.-India nuclear cooperation bill. We are currently in discussion with a number of other agreements that we are attempting to reach in order to plan out activity both today and tomorrow and possibly Friday. With that, we expect to complete our business this week and then following that we will be out until December 4, or that week of December 4. As we look ahead, because we have a number of issues to address, we will be keeping our colleagues notified on both sides of the aisle. There are a number of issues the Democratic leader and I have outlined that we would like to do before we leave in December.

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are a number of amendments that need to be debated. I would hope Senators understand, it is as if it is Friday afternoon at 2:30 and there are 18 or so amendments on here and they have to come and start debating them. We are going to finish this bill before we leave. That is what the majority leader said. I will cooperate with him in any way I can. This is legislation we have been waiting on for a long time. I hope Senators who have amendments will start debating them.

Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

IRAQ POLICY

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I thank the Chair. I may request to speak for a few more minutes than 5, and when the time comes, I will so inform the Chair.

Last week the American people went to the polls across our great Nation. They went not simply to choose new political leaders, but to ask those lead-

ers—Democrats and Republicans alike—to work together for a new and long-overdue direction in Iraq.

There is no doubt that the majority of American voters want change in an Iraq policy that has brought such death and chaos and the prospect of failure. There is no doubt that they want us to speak honestly about the current failures and boldly about the way through the present crisis. But it is also very clear that Americans are not defeatists. They want success in Iraq, they want our troops to succeed, and they want them to come home.

I note as I speak here there are hearings occurring in the Armed Services Committee. I commend Senator WARNER and Senator LEVIN for holding such a hearing. They heard this morning from some of our leading military figures. This afternoon there will be additional witnesses appearing before them. So I am very conscious that a lot of people are thinking about this issue now and that we hope to come up with some positive suggestions on how we might come to a successful conclusion of this policy—a policy, I might add, that is in deep jeopardy of failure.

In that respect, the message of the American people was one of hope: that years of strained, painful debate can give way to American pragmatism; that leaders can find in national security not a political cudgel but a political consensus; and that Iraq, even now, is not past salvaging, if we right our course immediately.

I hope the resignation of Secretary Rumsfeld is a sign that the White House has heard that message. But I would add very quickly that it is not enough to change the leadership at the Pentagon when a week ago Sunday the Vice President of the United States proclaimed that we intend to go, and I quote him, “full-speed ahead” in Iraq. The President must fundamentally change our Iraq policies if we are to reverse the downward spiral into chaos that threatens the territorial integrity of that country and our larger regional security interests—as well as the success of our war on al-Qaida and international terrorism.

In the midst of an election season, some of America's best foreign policy minds were working diligently to find that new direction. We are lucky to have two distinguished former public servants to chair the Study Group on Iraq: the former Secretary of State James Baker and the former Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Lee Hamilton. Their group of experts is striving diligently to find consensus on a set of policy recommendations to put before the President and the Congress of the United States. It is painful work, but it is necessary work. And the tragedy of Iraq—over 30,000 injured troops, hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis dead, more than 2,800 of our fellow citizens in uniform killed—the tragedy of Iraq demands nothing less than a new direction and some new thought.

It will take every dram of our honesty and pragmatism to turn around a society that—despite \$400 billion of taxpayer money, \$250 million every single day and still counting—remains broken, crippled, and fractured. The Iraqi economy is in worse shape today than it was in March of 2003. Electric and water treatment capacity, oil production, access to clean water, are all below prewar levels. America has spent \$14 billion training and equipping 300,000 Iraqi police and security forces; yet today as I speak on the floor of this Chamber, some 23 separate sectarian militias alone operate with impunity throughout Baghdad. Sectarian killings continue largely unabated, averaging scores of deaths a day.

These realities mean that none of us should underestimate the difficulties ahead. We need to recognize—every single time we talk about this matter—the remarkable service being performed by our men and women in uniform. Theirs is a very difficult job. Anyone who has been there, regardless of his or her views on policy, has to admire immensely the courage and determination of these people as they go out every single day, facing the kinds of problems that are everywhere in the streets of Baghdad, Fallujah, and other major urban areas. So I do not underestimate the tremendous burden these people bear every single day, as too often they become nothing more than target practice for those who seek to gain the upper hand in Iraq.

Nor do I underestimate the difficult task facing Jim Baker, Lee Hamilton, and their colleagues on this task force that is determined to find some answers to Iraq. They know, as I do, if there were any easy solutions we would have discovered them by now. It may be that members of the Baker-Hamilton commission will not be able to arrive at a consensus. I hope that is not the case. But I have no doubt that their efforts are taking place in a constructive and bipartisan spirit and we here should do everything we can to follow their example in the weeks and months ahead.

I hope to add briefly to that debate by sharing some of my own thoughts this afternoon. Taken individually, none of these proposals that I am going to discuss are groundbreaking or earthshattering in any way. A sound foreign policy rarely is. But after a war sparked by ideology and grand theorizing, maybe we can once more learn the value of quiet virtues. Taken together, I believe these suggestions might help to reverse the ongoing spiral into violence and chaos, permit the phased redeployment of U.S. troops within and from Iraq, and secure America's regional interests to the greatest extent.

Clearly, our interests are in disrepair, and other regions cry out for attention. We are further away from stabilizing Afghanistan and dealing a mortal blow to our al-Qaida and Taliban enemies. In fact, drug traffickers and

tribal warfare now threaten to destroy the fragile foundation of Afghanistan's nascent democracy and the Taliban is stronger now than at any point since our invasion.

This summer an emboldened and defiant Iran launched a proxy war against our ally Israel; and the apocalyptic mullahs are undeterred in their pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Last month North Korea claimed to have tested a nuclear weapon of its own, a further example of our country's growing vulnerabilities, a further cost of this administration's fixation on Iraq. While we have been bogged down in that country, North Korea has taken the chance to expand its nuclear arsenal fivefold.

Al-Qaida, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea—the conclusion is irrefutable: America is less safe today because of our Iraq diversion. That is precisely why so many voices among our civilian and military leadership are calling upon the President to change course in that country.

I believe there are five key ingredients to any course change that we must take: establishment of internal security in that country; phased redeployment of United States forces; continued training of an independent, professional military and security force for Iraq; a strong central government; and regional and international engagement.

Let me first talk briefly about security. I think we must continue to recruit and train forces that reflect Iraq's ethnic diversity, forces that are capable of neutralizing sectarian militias and are able to restore and maintain domestic stability. Without that, nothing is likely to happen. But I believe the hour has arrived when Iraq must assume the responsibility for policing itself. At great cost, the United States has given the Iraqi people the chance for a much brighter future. Now they must seize it. There is not a treasury deep enough nor an army large enough to achieve this goal if the Iraqi people themselves lack the will to achieve it for themselves.

Second, redeployment. "More troops or fewer troops" is a sterile debate. The reality is that in cities such as Baghdad and Falluja, our soldiers are going door to door like a police force on the front lines of religious violence, and they need to be removed from that fruitless exercise. Our troops should be relocated from these larger urban zones to less populated regions and border areas where they can more effectively advance our strategic interests: continued training of Iraqi forces and the protection of Iraq's territorial integrity until Iraqis can do so for themselves.

Remaining United States forces should be repositioned to United States bases in Kuwait and Qatar, where they could be available to protect American interests if they should be called upon, and to Afghanistan, where we must redouble our efforts to capture bin Laden, dismantle al-Qaida and neu-

tralize the Taliban and the drug lords who are funding them.

These movements must begin immediately and continue over the next 12 to 18 months, in concert with our efforts to enhance the stability of the Iraqi Government, engage Iraq's neighbors, and build a better and more secure life for the people of that country.

Third is professional military and security forces. Iraq will never be unified as a sovereign and secure nation until all of its citizens can count on the Iraqi forces to be capable of maintaining internal stability and protecting the nation's territorial integrity. But no Iraqi Army can ever meaningfully stand up when Iraq's political atmosphere remains so poisonous.

Which leads me to my fourth point, unity government. Our commanding generals have rightly concluded there is no military solution to Iraq's unfolding civil conflict. Only a political solution which unifies all Iraqis around a common cause will save Iraq from becoming a failed state.

So, along with the training of Iraqi troops, I believe we must tackle Iraq's political chaos, because only stability will be the cornerstone of a prosperous nation.

Finding common cause must come first and foremost from within Iraq. It must come from Iraq's secular and religious leaders, leaders such as Ayatollah Sistani. We need Iraqis like him at the table and the United States needs to encourage more acts of leadership by him and others.

Our political goals for Iraq are clear. Though Iraq's constitution is federal, with local flexibility for provinces, we must insist on a stable and unified central government, capable of distributing resources to its citizens on a just basis. Iraq's oil must be shared equitably. At the end of the day, Iraq may end up a divided and partitioned state where sectarian influences govern; but that should not be our stated policy. Nor should we allow short-term political expediency to keep us from disbanding sectarian militias. Our failure to confront them head-on forces uncountable Iraqis to live in daily fear for their very lives.

That said, I believe we should not preclude the possibility of integrating ex-militia members into the professional Iraqi military—but only if they be vetted and retrained first.

Fifth and finally, regional and international engagement. Iraq's neighbors have a huge stake in a stable and competent Iraq. If there is one thing that unites all of the nations bordering Iraq, it is the fear that Iraq will splinter into fractured enclaves with dedicated sectarian militias that will not only terrorize each other but threaten the stability of the nations that border them.

It is for that reason that the administration should find willing partners—if it were willing to look. Iraq's neighbors, as well as regional international organizations can help Iraq toward

unity and stability—not from the goodness of their hearts but from the fact of their interest. Regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia could be enormously useful to us as mediators—a "Friends of Iraq" group, committed to ensuring the integrity of its borders, the disbanding of the militias, and the unity of its government.

When it comes to protecting our security, we must be as willing to wage diplomacy as we have been willing to wage war. Robust, muscular, and direct negotiations are not gifts to our enemies. They are the essential tools of avoiding conflict and securing peace and stability.

We are reminded of the eloquence of John Kennedy, who said many years ago, "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate."

Further, rebuilding Iraq's economy should be a part of any regional and international rescue mission. The Iraqi Government has formally requested help from the United States to develop an International Compact for Iraq. This compact could serve as a blueprint for a new partnership with the international community, one aimed at consolidating peace and pursuing political, social, and economic development over the next five years.

There are no guarantees, of course. Iraq is broken. The policies of the Bush administration, in my view, have sadly failed. But last week's elections have given us the gift of opportunity—to chart a new course in Iraq if we are honest enough, tough enough, and bold enough to find it.

Reducing and withdrawing our troop presence. Restoring security. Supporting the development of a unified Iraqi Government. Enlisting Iraq's neighbors and the international community. Creating economic activity in that shattered country. If we take these steps, or ones like them, we can serve our larger interests in peace and prosperity and security, not only for the Iraqis but, as importantly, for ourselves. We can begin to redeem a great harm.

The American voters have asked this of us. While they don't have a specific plan in mind, they want us to come together, to chart a new course, to make some sense, to be rational and think about the importance not only of Iraq getting on its feet—but of our nation meriting its vital role in the world. No other nation in the 21st century is going to lead but this great nation of ours. Other nations down the road may assume that responsibility, but as far as I can see, only one nation can lead now—and it is ours. And if we continue on the path we are following today in Iraq, that mission will be far more difficult to fulfill.

So far more is at risk here than just what happens in Iraq. We risk failing the calling of leadership itself.

Anything I suggested here, I know others have raised. But I came here today, above all, to ask a question:

Who is thinking about this in a concrete way? I trust that Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton are. I hope that my colleagues are.

You may not like all of my ideas. You may reject all of them. But whatever ideas come to the fore, let us debate the substance in tolerance and good faith, open to new thinking and hungering for new action.

The American people are watching us, wondering if we have heard their call for a new way forward. The Iraqi people are watching us, wondering if their united country can still survive and succeed. Americans and Iraqis both want what it is within our power to give them: hope.

Again, I thank the President for his indulgence in providing a little more time.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

TAX EXTENDERS

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise to address two matters that will be taken up by the Senate in this lameduck session. The first will be after we come back from the Thanksgiving holiday. We will be taking up a tax bill that will include a group of what we call tax extenders. These are tax breaks that are in existing law which are running out of time. They are going to cease to exist by the 1st of the year, unless we extend these tax breaks. One of those tax breaks is very important to our State of Florida. In fact, six States in this Union do not have a personal income tax at the State level. Whereas, those 44 States that do have the personal income tax are able to deduct that State income tax in the calculation of their Federal income tax, in those six States that do not have the State income tax, they have no such deduction. But their main revenue stream is a State sales tax.

The deduction of that State sales tax has been a major help to constituents in those six States, including my State of Florida. It has saved, for example, the people of the State of Florida \$750 million per year in Federal income taxes by being able to deduct their Florida State sales tax.

It is my understanding that this is all worked out; that, in fact, we are going to be able to extend all of these tax extenders and that it will be done in the week of the lameduck session when we come back after the Thanksgiving holiday. That, of course, is enormously important.

I had a hand, along with Senator HUTCHISON of Texas, in passing that bill to begin with, but that bill was effective for 2 years. That 2 years is about to expire at the end of this calendar year. So we certainly need that extended.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG AMENDMENT

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I also want to speak on a matter

that Senator VITTER and I will introduce shortly, for there will be in front of the Senate an appropriations bill that will fund the Food and Drug Administration. Senator VITTER will offer, on behalf of himself and myself, an amendment that we had offered to the Senate on a different appropriations bill several months ago—and passed—that would allow Americans to purchase low-cost prescription drugs from Canada.

Every year, millions of Americans, who cannot otherwise afford their prescriptions at pharmacies, seek those same FDA-approved prescriptions from Canada at significantly lower prices.

Back in July, Senator VITTER and I introduced a separate amendment on this issue to the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill. Our amendment prohibited Customs from stopping the importation of FDA-approved prescription drugs by American citizens.

The amendment was in response to a new policy implemented by U.S. Customs which resulted in over 38,000 prescription drug shipments being detained by Federal officials. Our amendment received overwhelming bipartisan support when it was added to the Senate bill.

This Senator started receiving complaints as far back as 2½ years ago. They had been ordering prescriptions from Canada for years, and suddenly Customs was confiscating their prescriptions. Customs has admitted that it was to the tune of almost 40,000 prescriptions.

To a senior citizen who is so desperate to make financial ends meet—and, in fact, sadly, in America in the year 2006, some senior citizens are having to make a choice because of their financial condition between buying their groceries or buying their prescription medicines. They are forced to do things such as cutting their medicine tablets in half to try to stretch it out when, in fact, their doctor tells them that is not what they should be doing. Yet it is happening.

Over and over again, seniors have been able to order from Canadian pharmacists at half the cost of their prescription medicine. It is not a question of safety because it is made by the same manufacturer and even with the same packaging.

Back in the summer, Senator VITTER and I saw an opportunity on an appropriations bill to prohibit Customs from using the appropriated moneys for the seizure of those kinds of individual purchases for a small duration of time—no more than a 90-day supply of their prescriptions and only from Canada.

We passed it in the Senate overwhelmingly. It goes down to a House-Senate conference committee, and they watered down that provision to say that it can be done to bring those small, limited, individual supplies of prescription drugs from Canada but only if you bring it personally back from Canada.

That may help my two colleagues who are from the State of North Dakota because they are right next to the Canadian border. But clearly for the States of Senator VITTER and myself and the States in the Southeastern United States, that doesn't help at all, particularly since some of our seniors have been accustomed to ordering these much less expensive drugs by mail or by e-mail or by telephone calls.

When it got to the conference committee, they watered down the provision. That is what we are going to address today. I am waiting on Senator VITTER to come to the floor so we can offer this amendment.

We have a new opportunity on an appropriations bill that includes the Food and Drug Administration appropriations. This does not assure Americans access to lower cost medications from Canada, since the FDA can still hold up the imports if they choose to do so under current law. That is why we are going to add this amendment to prevent the FDA from interfering with the importation of prescription drugs from Canada.

A little bit of good news came out the last time we tried to do this with regard to the Customs Department. In October, Customs threw up its hands and said: We have more important things to do on the huge import of drugs that are counterfeit. That is what we are going after. We are not going to confiscate these individual purchases of a 90-day supply or less which are prescriptions from Canadian pharmacists.

With that as a precedent, it would seem to me that the Senate would certainly go along with us and put this in the law right now with regard to the FDA to make sure that this policy is very clear.

When Congress returns in January, we should look at, additionally, what is introduced by my colleague who is on the floor now, Senator DORGAN, and Senator SNOWE, the Pharmaceutical Market Access and Drug Safety Act.

This bipartisan bill, which I support, is going to set up a comprehensive system for importation of prescription drugs which will further help our senior citizens on lower prescription drug costs.

Ultimately, we will have to debate the very essence of the problem in Medicare prescription drug benefits, Part D benefits. That is going to be a whole new debate that we will have out here on how to fill the doughnut hole which some people say would cost something like \$26 billion. But there is a way to do that—by allowing Medicare to do what other parts of the Federal Government have done for years, including the Veterans' Administration and the Department of Defense; that is, use the bulk purchasing power to negotiate lower prices for drugs.

As most people know, that was prohibited in the Medicare prescription drug benefit. But I think we are going to be addressing that because that is a